School Counselor Inclusion

Article Critique

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**Annotated Bibliography/Summary**

As we proceed into the twenty-first century, school dynamics are ever changing as student diversity and needs evolve. Clark and Breman (2009) discuss how the needs of the students are changing as the school population increases and the racial, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity grows. The achievement gaps continue to widen, which creates more and more challenges for educators in the classroom.

As stated by the authors, inclusion in the past was meant to have students who were targeted for special education placed in a general education classroom, as a means for the least restrictive environment. These students are removed during the day for small group or individual counseling and lessons. This article presents a proposal to a new style of delivery, one in which will enhance classroom management, create a stronger learning environment, and reach more students. The proposal suggests working with academic and social-emotional needs within the classroom as a whole. The premise is that removing these few students from the classroom creates a stigma and places the students further behind by missing class time. It is also believed by the authors that this inclusion method in the classroom can benefit all students, not just the ones targeted for special educational needs. The authors emphasize that this proposal is certain to benefit all involved if there is collaboration among the teachers and school counselors.

**Critique**

The subject of this article seems to be a more positive and effective way in which to reach the students with special educational needs as well as those who are not receiving special education assistance, in other words, the entire student body. There are many students in school, who have various needs, but have not been labeled in need of special education. Students may have academic needs or behavioral needs, which go unmet for reasons such as non-detection, refusal of services, ineligible for special services, etc. In this plan of school counselor inclusion, more students can benefit from services such as learning study skills, organization skills, people skills, and social skills, which they may not otherwise receive. By teaching these skills, the school counselor is helping to create a solution to behavior and academic issues in the classroom in addition to modeling to the teacher appropriate classroom management.

The core of this inclusion is to assist the teachers by listening to the issues they have with students and by observing the classrooms in order to determine a plan that will ensure a better learning environment. This inclusion and collaboration technique is two-fold; it will help the teachers manage the classroom and will help the students become better students.

One of the main setbacks of the progression of school counseling programs, which the authors address, is the lack of cooperation and collaboration among administrators, school counselors, parents, and teachers. With the enormous pressure of standards testing, each has their own agenda. The agenda of all rather, should be the same, to provide each student with the environment and the tools to reach their full potential. The authors note that the consensus of the experts on collaboration is, if individuals are involved in the decision-making and contribution of the end result, they are more apt to cooperate and desire change. This change is achievable if everyone involved will work as a team, by placing the needs of the students ahead of our own.

**Reference:**

Clark, M. & Breman, J. (2009). School counselor inclusion: A collaborative model to provide academic and social-emotional support in the classroom setting. *Journal of Counseling and Development,* 87(1), 6-11.